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HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF THE FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH, SPARTA,
ILLINOIS (1944)

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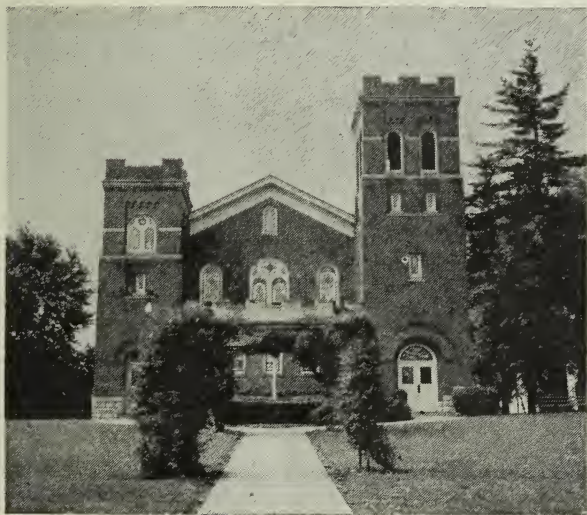
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HISTORICAL SKETCH

---of the---

First Presbyterian Church

Sparta, Illinois



Diamond Jubilee

June 4, 1944

Compiled by
MRS. J. L. GRIGG
Sparta, Illinois

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FOREWORD

The purpose of compiling the history of these seventy-five years is two-fold:

First: To preserve a permanent record of the fascinating story of the beginnings and growth of our church, the Sabbath school, woman's work, young people's work and of all the various organizations, which are so entwined to make them separate chapters.

Second: To so acquaint this generation with the richness of our heritage that we may be challenged to be awake and earnestly strive toward better growth and usefulness.

Without effort to give literary finish, the historian's chief aim has been to be accurate, merely trusting to the facts for charm to hold your attention.

Of necessity, this history must have its limitations. Should there be important omissions, kindly charge them to lack of space.

MRS. J. L. GRIGG

See Hist. Soc. 30 April 1914 New Haven
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HISTORICAL SKETCH

of the First Presbyterian Church of Sparta, Illinois

In such a time as this, where there are wars and rumors of wars and our hearts are anxious about the possibilities of our "World of Tomorrow," it is not easy to pause for a deep, quiet look into the yesteryears of our beloved church. We hesitate to take time off for such contemplation unless something special arrests our attention. Such a special time has come: Our Diamond Jubilee!—the 75th anniversary of the organization of our church—June 6, 1869 - June 6, 1944.

An anniversary is a time for memories. The gentle art of reminiscence is not so honored in these hurrying times. But, however closely the present absorbs us, it is well to keep in touch with the past. Its shadows shelter many heroic figures; its chronicles tell tales of unselfish toil, of lives freely spent in the pursuit of an ideal; yes, of honest failures from which we can draw inspiration and courage for our own task. We shall celebrate this anniversary, not only that we may lay a wreath on the tomb of our dead yesterdays, but also that the past may interpret the present for us and increase our zeal to carry on.

Our church is not as old as many of the churches in this community but our name is the one given the church in Scotland after the Reformation and before there were any divisions.

With grateful and humble pride we see our beautiful church today, with all the various rooms and their equipment, but we are equally proud that we can trace our history to a church of one room, with a vestibule and belfry.

The Sparta community was largely settled by the Scotch and Scotch-Irish. Some were native-born, but more of them had come from the heather-covered hills of Scotland or from Ulster in the Emerald Isle when their forebears had taken refuge from the persecutions in Scotland under Mary Queen of Scots and later during the "Killing Times." Only Presbyterianism could represent truly the religious opinions of a large majority of such a people.

In 1815, Samuel Giddings was sent out by the Presbyterian Missionary Society of Connecticut. Affectionately called "Father Gidding," he was the father of Presbyterianism in Missouri and Illinois. He lived only twelve years, but during the course of his ministry he established 12 churches, six in Missouri and six in Illinois. One in Kaskaskia was later moved to Chester.

In 1817, Rev. Samuel Wylie was sent as a missionary to the Kaskaskia area by the Reformed Presbyterian Church. He traveled all through this district until he came to the little settlement east of us, where he thought the location of the village so beautiful that he named it Eden. And Eden it must have been for it was laid out by a young surveyor from Philadelphia named "Adam"—Adam Wylie. Here was established the Bethel congregation of the Reformed Presbyterian church and many Christians in this community became members.

All went well for a time. Then a group began to long for a Presbyterian church of the kind in which they had been trained. After much discussion and in accordance with a previous notice, those who had signed a paper for the purpose of forming such a church, held a meeting at the Baptist church in Sparta in March, 1869. The meeting was organized by making Mr. John Stevenson of Eden, chairman, and Mr. John Watson to be secretary. To test the

opinion of the meeting in regard to whether they would organize under the old or new schools (not to be confused with the "Old Light" and new reformed divisions made in Scotland a number of years previously), a vote by ballot was taken.

The first vote was a tie. On the second vote, 14 were for the new school, nine for the old. Later it was voted to make it unanimous, but before the close of the meeting, a motion was made and carried to reconsider and to lay the matter on the table for further consideration at a meeting the first Wednesday in May. At that date the action for a new school church was reversed and it was decided unanimously that the new church would be organized under the old school. Making a decision and later reversing it seemed to be a favorite pastime of this group for many years over all kinds of questions. Such changeability may cause a smile as you read of it now. However, it did show a splendid spirit of tolerance and co-operation among the members and a willingness to do what was considered right and best for all concerned—a spirit not always found among Scotchmen, who are reputed to hold such strong convictions.

Had communications in the country been better at this time, so that the news came through on time, this new church at Sparta would not have met the problem of whether it would organize under the new or old school, for it was in this year of 1869 that the reunion was accomplished, amid great rejoicing, at special meetings of the two General Assemblies at Pittsburgh. The records of both churches were made a part of the official history of the reunited church. This amounted to a declaration that the church had always been one, even in its time of divided life. A splendid thanksgiving fund for its work, amounting to over seven millions of dollars, was raised to celebrate the reunion.

A committee of Presbytery, consisting of Rev. A. J. Clark, Rev. Waggoman, Rev. Templeton and Elder Mann came to Sparta and organized the new church June 6, 1869. Thirty-eight members were received on letter from the Reformed Presbyterian, Bethel Congregation, Eden, Illinois; eleven from the United Presbyterian church, ten from various Presbyterian churches, one from the Methodist Episcopal church, Sparta, and three by profession and examination, making in all 63 communicants. James Crawford, James Craig and S. B. Hood were elected elders. Mr. Hood was ordained and installed but the other two, having been ordained in the Reformed Church, were only installed. Four days later the Session held its first meeting to receive into the church several who asked for admission.

The first to join were Dr. Thomas Neilson and Mrs. Mary A. Wilson on profession; Mrs. Mary Neilson, Mr. James Sproul and Rachel, his wife, by letter from the Reformed Church, Bethel Congregation, Eden, Illinois, and Mrs. Sarah Burgess by letter from the United Presbyterian Church, Sparta, Illinois.

On June 12, 1869, the first congregational meeting was held, at which five trustees were chosen, Mr. Bryce Crawford, John Stevenson, R. H. Rosborough, Dr. H. R. Guthrie and John Watson. These men were instructed to present a set of by-laws to govern the congregation. For many years, they brought in the order of business for each congregational meeting. A committee was appointed at this first meeting to find a suitable place to hold public worship. The Odd Fellows Hall was available. The Baptists and Methodists offered their churches when not in use, and it is recorded a communion was held in the United Presbyterian Church.

But no time was lost. On July 30, 1869, at a congregational meeting a committee was appointed to look for a suitable site and procure plans for a church building. At least a half of the members lived in Eden and asked that the church be built at the east end of

Sparta. After considering several locations, the present site was chosen. The land belonged to Mr. Wm. Rosborough, who, with his wife and daughter, Elizabeth, had transferred their letters from the United Presbyterian Church. The Session was instructed to contact the Board of Church Extension (now included in the Board of National Missions) for aid in building the new church. The church building decided upon was 45 by 110 feet, with vestibule all across the front, and a belfry, costing \$9000.

All questions of conducting the church were decided in the congregational meetings. In those days, such meetings were to be reckoned with. When the call was made, all members, with their families, laid aside everything else and went to the meeting. Full discussion of all matters of interest to the church, interspersed with good old Scotch and Irish wit and good humor, made the meetings most enjoyable. The dinner together was a highlight of the year. The table holding the food did the proverbial groaning, for there was turkey and chicken and goose, far-famed jellies and jams, Scotch shortbread and cakes, pies, home-made bread and rolls. From the expressed thanks in the minutes, everything was highly appreciated, even if it did have to be eaten in the pews. It is quite noticeable that whenever a controversial question was brought into the meeting, it was moved to postpone its consideration until after dinner. The milk of human kindness seemed to flow more freely then.

At the end of the first year, it was decided to call a settled minister. A young man, Mr. John Hood of the Reformed Church O. S. at Eden, was chosen unanimously. An adjourned meeting of Kaskaskia Presbytery was held June 15, 1870 in Sparta to receive Mr. Hood on examination into the Presbytery and to install him the same day as the minister of this church. The advent of the minister gave a great impetus to the work of the church. Many asked to be admitted to membership. Among them was his sister, Miss Belle Hood from Normal, Illinois, and James Hood and his wife from the United Presbyterian church, Sparta. Miss Mary A. E. Gault also joined. She afterwards became the minister's charming bride, whom everyone loved.

If space and better records permitted, it would be interesting to note the personalities of those families that became the pillars of the early church. They were plain people—took life seriously and were stern and uncompromising with what they considered evil, but they were very human too.

They loved the good and beautiful wherever found and were able to recognize and appreciate it. It is tradition how the imported paisley shawls worn by the wife of Mr. John Watson, the scotch merchant from Glasgow, and the real Brussell's laces worn on the Sabbath dresses of Elder James Crawford's wife, were the envy of all the women of the congregation. Many were great readers, not of fiction but of weightier subjects, and then discussed them in debating societies which headed the list of amusements of that day.

Mr. Hood, through his enthusiasm and fine leadership, soon had all departments of the church going well. The Sabbath School was a success from the first, with Mr. James Hood its first superintendent. Each year it was reported how many Bible verses were recited in the classes; also how many questions in the shorter catechism had been learned, as well as what funds were contributed. He taught the scholars to obey Christ's last command to spread the gospel by supporting a child in India in one of our mission schools and the letters that came from this school were listened to with great interest. In 1907, when Mr. A. L. Wilson was superintendent, he reported he had more teachers than classes with an enrollment of 298. The membership of the church was 398 at that time.

Mr. S. B. Hood was appointed the first delegate to Presbytery from this church, to be held at Pinckneyville, April 7, 1870. At the first congregational meeting with the new minister, Mr. Wm. Addison was made chairman. This meeting decided to adopt the rotary system of electing elders and each would hold office for three years. Four more members were added to the session. Those elected were Wm. Addison, R. F. Beattie, James Hood and John Stevenson. It was decided to rent the pews to meet the contingent expenses, along with voluntary contributions. But by 1875 this was discontinued and the budget was cared for by voluntary subscriptions. By 1910, duplex envelopes and the every-member canvass were in vogue. A trustee for years, Mr. Joseph Steele was said to get two-thirds of the subscriptions each year and more than that, he made you like it and believe that was just what you wanted to do. It was also decided that during December, January, February and March they would hold but one service; the rest of the year both a morning and evening service.

The early session of ruling elders really ruled. They kept careful watch over the membership. If anyone absented himself from divine worship or was guilty of injustice or wrong doing to his fellowman, or guilty of laxness in his morals, he was visited by a committee from the session and if he did not show repentance and sorrow for his sin he was called to appear before the session. In case he did not appear, his name was put on the separate list or stricken from the roll, if need be. There was a long list of "don'ts" in which it was considered unbecoming for christians to indulge. On this list, horse racing did not appear. Rumor had it that Elder James Crawford's brother Bryce had a weakness for fast horses. The ones he drove were known for their beauty and speed and this was the reason for the omission. The following are excerpts from the sessional records:

September 3, 1882—Brothers Sproul and Gordon were appointed to prepare a paper giving views of the session in regard to dancing and Sabbath desecration.

Echoes of July 1, 1884—After quite a lengthy discussion on the subject of dancing, the session closed with prayer by the moderator.

January, 1884—Brother S. B. Hood was appointed a committee of one to visit one of the members in reference to keeping his livery stable open on the Sabbath day.

August, 1885—Elders James Hood and Gordon were appointed a committee to visit another member and confer with him in regard to the rumor of his intemperance.

January, 1887—S. B. Hood was appointed a committee of one to confer with others in regard to profanity.

April 4, 1890—Word has come to the ears of the session that one of the members has been guilty of unchristian conduct. It was moved she be suspended from her church privileges until she shall appear before session and give satisfaction.

Thus the Christian way of life, as they saw it, was safeguarded in the early day.

As a church we have not at any time had a spectacular growth, but rather a slow, steady climb which is probably better. We have had our ups and downs, our highlights and shadows but as a whole we have prospered and feel that the hand of the Lord is with us in our efforts.

The ministry of music was given much attention from the first. A committee of Dr. H. R. Guthrie and Mr. John Watson had charge of

the choir for two years. The singers were appointed at the congregational meeting each year. In 1873, Mr. Watson wished to be relieved and W. J. Brown was appointed to work with Mr. Guthrie. The next year Dr. Guthrie asked to be relieved and moved that Mr. Brown be given full charge of the choir. This was the beginning of Mr. Browns' long and faithful service as leader of the choir for which he had a natural gift. After twenty-five years, he took a vacation when Mr. John Rosborough, Mr. Alonzo Stephenson, Prof. Sexton, Prof. DeLong and Mrs. Gordon each took charge, but for a short time. Mr. Brown came back and he was followed by Mrs. Gordon, Prof. Garritson, and now our own Mrs. Moffat. There has been a long list of singers and organists in this church, who have given unstintedly of their talent and time to this service. The list is too long to have personal attention in a short sketch such as this, but they are remembered with loving pride and determination.

The early church discussed what they should sing for quite a while. The Hymns and Psalms of the Church of 1843 were finally adopted, to be used with Ponce's version of the Psalms, which were used in all the other kinds of Presbyterian churches in the community. It is hard for us today to realize what a vital question psalm singing was at that time. Mrs. Klene, daughter of S. B. Hood, writes that when her mother and father were married, her father took his letter to her mother's church, the United Presbyterian. When they appeared before the session, Mr. Hood told them he wanted to ask the privilege of singing hymns when he went back to visit his own Presbyterian church. (The United Presbyterian at that time sang the Psalms to the old Psalm tunes). But they refused the privilege, so her mother said, "Well, then I want my letter to his church." And so from then on they were devoted members of this church. Thus we narrowly missed losing these consecrated people.

There was an organ in the church from the first. It was later replaced by a larger cabinet organ. The record shows a committee of women were given the task of selling the old organ and applying the receipts on the new one.

During Mr. Cate's charge, a pipe organ was installed in 1894. It was the first pipe organ in town and, equally interesting, is the fact it was delivered to the church free of debt. This was made possible by contributions, the receipts from the sale of the old organ, by the Pastor's Aid, and a recital given by Prof. Darby, organist of Christ's Church Cathedral. Many came to hear this new organ and the treasury was filled.

In the 75 years of our church life, we have been served by fourteen ministers, which is a large number compared to the records of other churches who have held 75th celebrations in recent years. Most of these churches were served by not more than five to seven ministers. This is food for thought. Could the trouble possibly lie with us? We have always been able to get ministers, even in the early day when they were scarce in this newly-opened territory, but we seem to have difficulty to get them to stay. Before long some other church, thought to be a larger, more fruitful field, would woo him from us. A church officer was heard to say long ago, he thought we should include in our call, a guarantee of a promotion soon.

We have been singularly blest in the ministers sent to lead us. They have, for the most part, been men of ability, with a good education—a Presbyterian tradition—kind and sympathetic, zealous in their preaching, interpreting the word of God fearlessly; their one ambition, to advance the Kingdom of God on earth. If it were possible, it would be a delight to have many in the congregation recall the highlights of these pastorates as they remember them.

Dr. Bailey, an ex-college president, was a physical and mental giant. His sermons attracted large crowds and the reverent way he conducted the services made a profound impression. The church school and church service had to occupy the same room, but he insisted the school be dismissed in silence and the organ prelude begun at once. As you entered the church the prelude seemed a veil dropped between the outside world and the sanctuary. We were asked to be reverent, thoughtful and quiet. A splendid preparation for a message from a servant of the Most High. His series of lectures on prophecy in the evening services are still remembered. Each brought pencil and paper and there was much searching of the scriptures.

Our other D. D. was the "Beau Brummel" among our ministers. He was young and very energetic. A most loveable character and a true child of God. His sister said Dr. Green could not decide at first whether to be a preacher, like his father, or an actor. He was so fond of the highest and best in literature, had the classics at his tongue's end and liked to interperet choice bits not only by voice but by dramatic art. From the first he won the hearts of all the youth of the church, who watched every opportunity to do something to please him. He mentioned he thought the reading stand on the pulpit a disgrace. A class of 'teen-age Sunday School girls took the matter up and bought one that he selected. The black pedestal, with the forlorn red velvet band, used sometimes for flowers, is all that remains of it, the top having disappeared, and the donors are some of the grandmothers now sitting in the pews.

Ever since the church was built, the need of a manse was felt. It was given to Dr. Green to make it a reality. He went after it with vigor. It was of his planning and he took great pleasure in its construction. The lot east of the church could not be bought at that time, so it was placed on the lot back of the church. Dr. Green, his wife and baby lived in the new home but a few months when he accepted a call to Eighth Church, Chicago. He visited our church a few years later and preached for us. It was a very welcome visit.

Mr. Allison and his wife were both scotch and spoke with quite a brogue. In preaching, when Mr. Allison became very earnest and talked fast, it was hard for the people to follow him. But he was well received and did much to stabilize the church and it grew.

Mr. Fleming worked hard to build up the church in all departments. From the early days, the church went on record as not for themselves but for others, and were careful to do their part in supporting what was called the schemes of the church that came down from the general body of the church. These schemes later were called boards of the church and became twelve in number. It was found that the work of these boards overlapped in so many cases that many were combined. Now we have but the four boards—the Foreign Mission Board, the National Missions Board, the Board of Christian Education and the Board of Pensions.

Mr. Fleming had his church "board conscious" before he was here very long. During his pastorate the session highly commended Mrs. R. H. Rosborough for the Mission Band she organized for young boys and girls. She taught them the Bible and how to pray. She gave them a study course on the church and its work for Christ. When they were able to master this book, she graduated them into the Christian Endeavor Society, which was a new thing in our church. Near the close of this pastorate, Miss Florence Craig, daughter of Elder James Craig, joined the church. She was the first child baptized in this congregation.

Mr. Cate will always be remembered for his prayers. Every meeting he attended he was asked to pray. You would have to have heard

him in a sick room to understand what comfort and strength came to the sorrowing through his prayers, or what an inspiration they were on joyous occasions, especially when he made his first visit on a new-born babe.

We have not at any time had a spectacular growth, but rather a slow, steady climb. We have had our high and low tides, our ebb and flow.

Near the close of the century there was a marked increase in membership. Mr. Parsons became the minister and it was soon apparent we must have more room, either a new church or remodel the old one. Since each side of the question had many sponsors it took much discussion to arrive at a conclusion. Those wanting the new church did not get it. Neither did those who wanted to remodel at a cost of not more than \$5000 have their way.

It was while Mr. Scott was with us June 14, 1908 that it was finally decided to enlarge, remodel and decorate the church. It is this building with its beautiful auditorium, its memorial windows, convenient lecture room, organ loft and choir rooms, that we occupy today. The memorial windows were donated by the families of those in whose memory they were given and bear the names of Dr. Solon R. Boynton, Wm. and Mary Elizabeth Rosborough, David and Tabitha Boyd, John and Jane Stevenson, James and Agnes Brown, Rev. John Hood and wife, John and Martha Watson, Annie and Florence Holdaway, the Burr Family and H. L. Armstrong. The other windows were given by Sunday school classes and other groups. In this way, many had a definite interest in the building. This work was accomplished at a cost of about \$17,000. Mr. A. A. Brown was chairman of the finance committee.

Mr. Scott invited Dr. George Robinson, one of his teachers at the Presbyterian Seminary, Chicago, to preach both morning and evening at the dedication.

There was an informal meeting in the afternoon, when the other ministers in town took part and the boy choir sang. It was Mrs. Charles Gordon who conducted this choir. For this work, she is commended in the minutes of the session. The boys were given a camping trip for a number of years, over in the Missouri Ozarks, where the government now has a large camp for Italian prisoners. Girls with their chaperons were allowed to go, too, and it was a merry time. Mr. Scott took time to go on these trips and felt well repaid. He took an active part in the camp activities and camp life. Through this close contact, he gained an influence which was clearly apparent in the christian attitude of the young people.

Rev. Flannigan was with us but three months and very few got to know him.

The kindly spirit of Dr. Von der Lippe and his Scotch wife won them friends from the first. He had the philosophical mind of the German people and it is doubtful if this Scotch people ever did understand him. His power of sacrifice put us to shame. "Christ did so much for us, we do so little for him," was taught so often by him. One summer he, accompanied by Mr. T. B. Stephenson and Prof. Scott, attended a Sunday school convention in Zurich, Switzerland. He was able to spend a short time in the Fatherland still dear to him. He is believed to be preaching in California.

Mr. Nagel was with us but a year and was never installed.

It was during Mr. Conn's pastorate we held the celebration of our fiftieth anniversary, at which time Rev. Fleming came back to preach the sermon. This celebration drew large crowds and was a joyful occasion. Besides the regular services, there was an afternoon

meeting including the following on its program: Reminiscences by Dr. W. J. Smiley; Letters from former ministers; Testimonies by former and present members; Patriotic History of the Church, Mrs. S. A. McKelvey.

In November 14, 1926, 7:00 p. m., Mr. Conn conducted the dedication of our present organ in a beautiful ceremony of song, responsive reading from the Bible, and an official service. Dr. E. B. Probasco was at the organ.

The pastorates of the remaining ministers, Mr. Conn, Mr. Murdock and Mr. Krebs, are still known to the church and need no record. We want Mr. Conn to know we are happy that he has come back to live among us and has consented to be our Pastor Emeritus. To Mr. Krebs, we express our appreciation of his work among us. His teachings have helped and revived us more than he knows. His name will always be linked with Calvin Hall and what it has meant to the organizations of this church. This hall includes a large room, which can be used for all kinds of meetings, a well-equipped kitchen, rest rooms and new heating plant. It was dedicated at a dinner of the congregation by Dr. Roberts of the Chester Church, in 1941. It cost about \$13,000. Mr. Secor was chairman of the building committee. A sum of \$3740 remains unpaid, \$3400 of which is pledged.

In the early years, Presbytery put Blair and Steeleville churches under the care of our session. They were afterwards relieved. Now, since the Blair church has closed, we have had the pleasure of welcoming many of them into our church.

I would like to mention the Daily Vacation Bible Schools and the Young People's conferences in our church. Now our young people go to Lindenwood for their training and all who go come back enthusiastic. The schools of missions and mission study classes were found of value in christian education. The Scout work holds a high place in our activities.

We cannot close without mentioning the thing nearest our hearts today—the War. We were torn by the ravages of the first world war and so soon we are in World War II. The list of those called out grows longer and longer and we hold these dear ones on our minds continually. We are confronted with the thought of how helpless we are to protect them and thank God for the privilege of prayer.

WHAT THE WOMEN HAVE MEANT TO THE CHURCH

The women have always considered their work as auxiliary to the church and an integral part of it. The Woman's Missionary Society was organized by Mr. John Hood in 1876 and became a member of the Presbyterian when Dr. Brooks of St. Louis, organized that society, in Alton, in 1877. This work of sharing Christ with others includes study, prayer and giving, believing:

If we know, we care,
If we care, we pray,
If we pray, we give.

The women of this society are banded together to pray daily for the workers in our prayer calendar for that day and for those with whom they work. We have a part in supporting a missionary in Persia, Africa, Philippines, Syria and Mexico and among eight underprivileged groups in this country and Porto Rica. Our work is principally in schools and hospitals. Mrs. E. C. Secor is president. In June, 1937, a missionary organization was effected, known now as the Evening Missionary Society. It is related to the older group and they share in the same responsibilities. Mrs. Shaffner is president.

PASTOR'S AID

Since the early records are not available, the date of organization cannot be given but the minutes show a report from this body in the late seventies.

Mrs. H. R. Guthrie was its first president. Its work was social service. It was to help the session to care for the sick and needy. It was the day before nurses and convenient hospitals and many women sat up at night with those ill or took care of their families. They met monthly and paid dues and did hand work to meet their contingent expenses. Later there was a benevolent society that looked after charity cases. It was in charge of Mrs. Simpson, Mrs. C. W. Miller and Mrs. S. S. Taylor. The Aid absorbed this work and now names the committee that administers the Flower Fund, which is collected mostly in the church. The work of the Pastor's Aid has been concentrated lately on the physical needs of the church. It stands ever ready to take its share in all work undertaken by the church. We are indebted to them for many of the comforts we enjoy in this place of worship. It supplied the collection plates, choir robes, services flags, shrubs on lawn, carpets, binding of the Bible, gave towards repairs on manse, equipment for Calvin Hall, almost half of present organ, Honor Roll Board and a liberal donation to the building fund. These are a few of the items that came from them. Mrs. Chas. Gordon is president. The earliest record of woman's work was to sell the first organ and apply the receipts on a new one.

In 1907, at a congregational meeting, when voluntary gifts were coming in to wipe out a debt of \$900 in a whirlwind campaign, Mrs. S. B. Hood said she was authorized by the Aid to give \$50.00. This the trustees, in a spirit of chivalry, declined with thanks, saying it would be unnecessary to take the women's money. **HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED!**

At the annual meeting in 1895, it was decided three ladies be elected by the women of the church, as auxiliary members of the trustees. Mrs. James Hood, Mrs. R. H. Rosborough and Mrs. J. A. Holdoway were duly elected. No further record of this work.

When Mr. Cate was here he organized the "Helping Hand." It was divided into six divisions, each division a different aged group. The sixth division was the Pastor's Aid. This is very similar in principle to the new association plan now developing for the women of our church. About three-fourths of the organizations have adopted this plan but it is left to the local church to do what seems best with them.

Among those who have gone from this church into christian work we find the following: Mr. Magee, a candidate for the ministry, was under the care of Presbytery—later moved from this community.

Mr. James Sproul was licensed to preach. In all kinds of weather he drove to some of the smaller adjacent churches on Sabbath to break the bread of life, after being a merchant all week.

Mr. John Willie Hood taught in mission schools in North and South Dakota, later did missionary work in the Oregon country.

Mr. Alexander Hood, his son, is now a missionary to the Mona Indians in North Fork, California.

Miss Mary McClurkin, after attending Dr. White's Bible School in New York, did missionary work in the slums of that city.

Mr. J. Luther Beattie became a minister, was ordained in this church, now retired and living in Virginia.

Mr. Marshall Pinkerton, a graduate of Princeton Seminary, a former missionary in India, now preaching in Houston, Texas.

Miss Lois Boyd was baptized in this church. Although she left it, there is nothing like getting a good start. We are interested in her work in India.

The adult Bible classes have stood solidly behind the church. We hold in remembrance, Class 17 taught by Mr. H. J. Holdoway; also classes 13 and 18, taught by Mrs. Conn and Mrs. Palmer. It is over forty years since a class of girls of high school age gave the church a gift of exquisite Austrian linen for use in the communion. Mrs. Charles A. Steele has replaced it recently.

The records show that from 1869 to 1919, there were 1162 members received into the church; From 1919 to 1940, 786, and from 1940 to March 1, 1944, an increase of 140, making a total of 2088 souls received into our communion. Our present membership is 514. Our oldest member is Mrs. A. C. Culp. She is almost 94.

In 1911, there was a motion in the session to concur with the trustees to ask the congregation to sell the manse for \$1500. This carried. The old home of Robert Rosborough was rented for Dr. Von der Lippe. Later the Charles Mann property on South Market Street was purchased and used since for the manse.

Our consecrated session has always seen to it that our church has been able to function between pastorates. We are deeply indebted to the trustees who keep watch over the church property.

The newest branch of service is that of deacon. Year by year, their work is better understood and more effective.

In every church there must be leaders but there are also men and women, with skill and devotion, who are good followers, yet their names may never appear in print. It is these silent partners we wish to commend for all leaders know it requires this solid following of the church to accomplish what has been done here in 75 years.

Let us pledge ourselves to carry on. This church should be thought of as in its youth, looking forward to greater tasks it may accomplish, and still greater victories which it may win for Christ and humanity.

List of Former Pastors

Rev. John Hood, June 1870—April 1878.
Dr. J. W. Bailey, July 1878—December 1880.
Dr. Thos. W. Green, May 1881—December 1882.
Rev. Allison, August 1883—February 1885.
Rev. J. Budman Fleming, March 1886—February 1890.
Rev. C. N. Cate, April 1891—September 1900.
Rev. Wm. Parsons, March 1901—October 1904.
Rev. V. B. Scott, April 1905—November 1909.
Rev. Flannigan, 1909—1910.
Rev. A. B. von der Lippe, September 1911—April 1917.
Rev. E. W. Nagel, July 1917—August 1918.
Rev. D. M. Conn, November 1918—June 1928.
Rev. J. C. Murdock, October 1928—July 1940.
Rev. L. T. Krebs, January 1941—

Members of Present Session

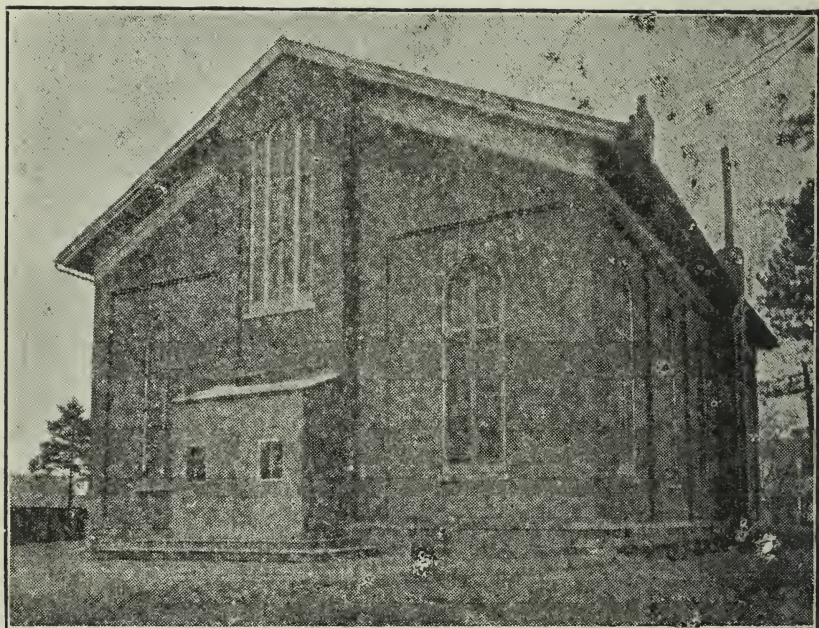
L. T. Krebs, moderator; D. Rilen McConachie, clerk; H. J. Holdoway, A. M. Barker, Arthur E. Weber, J. L. Grigg, E. H. Pressley, Otto Jaronitsky, Howe V. Morgan, W. W. Lynn, E. C. Secor and H. X. Huss.

The Board of Deacons

Miller Stephenson, Klondis Pirtle (U. S. Army), George Palmer (U. S. Navy), Harry Kelley, Lyle McBee, Frank Palmer, Louis Uchtman, Wm. J. Robertson, Dr. T. A. DeRousse, Russell McConachie, David N. Conn, Austin R. Cairns (U. S. Navy), Ralph Bannister and Michael Bernasek (U. S. Army).

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The present house of worship once looked like this. The above picture was taken soon after the church was built and before it was remodeled to look like the building in which the congregation now worships. Set well back from the street, with a large lawn in front, today's First Presbyterian Church of Sparta is one of the most beautiful church edifices in Southern Illinois.



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